

APPROPRIATION FOR SURVEYS IN ALASKA.

L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

TRANSMITTING

A COMMUNICATION FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
RECOMMENDING INCREASE OF ESTIMATE FOR SURVEYS IN
ALASKA.

FEBRUARY 7, 1903.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be
printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, February 6, 1903.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith, for the consideration of Congress, a communication from the Secretary of the Interior, of the 4th instant, recommending the increase of the estimate of appropriation for surveys and resurveys of the public lands for the fiscal year 1904 from \$325,000 to \$400,000, with a proviso that the additional \$75,000 be applied to the survey of public lands, missions, and other reservations in Alaska, to be made available for contracting until the entire sum shall have been contracted; and a further proviso providing higher rates of compensation per mile for surveys in Alaska than is now allowed by law.

Respectfully,

L. M. SHAW,
Secretary.

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
GENERAL LAND OFFICE,
Washington, D. C., February 3, 1903.

SIR: I am in receipt by reference from the Department for consideration and immediate report of a letter from Hon. W. L. Jones, House of Representatives, dated January 29, 1903, relating to an appropriation for public-land surveys in Alaska.

Mr. Jones states that he has had a conference with Hon. Joseph G. Cannon, chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, with reference to the appropriation for surveys in Alaska, and that he urged that the general appropriation be increased from \$325,000 to a larger amount, \$425,000 or \$450,000, with the provision that \$100,000 or \$125,000 be used for surveys in Alaska. Mr. Cannon raised objection to this proposition upon the ground that this Department had sent in no estimate for surveys in Alaska, and stated that the Department sent in the regular estimate of \$325,000, the same as last year, when \$5,000 was apportioned to Alaska, and under which Mr. Jones assumes that about the same amount will be allowed to Alaska during the coming year.

Mr. Jones refers to the annual report of the Department, quoting the following statement from page 9 thereof :

The surveyor-general recommends an appropriation of \$113,872 for surveys in the district of Alaska for the next fiscal year. The grounds upon which he urges this appropriation are the necessity of establishing the rectangular system of surveys, of protecting the numerous interests that have within the past few years been developing in that district, and of preventing conflict between the mission, church, and school reservations on the one hand and claims under the various public-land laws on the other, which are sure to arise if delay of surveys because of inadequate appropriation be longer continued.

Mr. Jones desires to be advised of the wishes of the Department with reference to Alaskan surveys through a letter to himself or to the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations.

In response to the direction of the Department to report in this matter, I have the honor to state as follows:

For the fiscal years ending June 30, 1901, 1902, and 1903 the sum of \$5,000 was apportioned to Alaska from the general appropriation for each of said years.

Under the apportionment of \$5,000 for the year 1901 a contract was let by the surveyor-general for nearly the full amount (\$4,950) of the apportionment. This contract was dated June 21, 1901, and action thereon was not taken until after the close of the fiscal year; hence said contract was necessarily charged to the fiscal year 1902 (having been approved during said year), and the apportionment for 1901 lapsed accordingly, not being available for contracting after the close of the year for which the appropriation was made.

No contracts have as yet been received from the surveyor-general under the apportionment of \$5,000 made to Alaska for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1903.

It appears from the record that the deputy surveyor to whom said contract chargeable to the appropriation for the fiscal year 1902 was let made no returns of survey thereunder, and the contract has been canceled.

I am of the opinion that a liberal appropriation should be made for surveys in Alaska, in order that the standard, township, and subdivisional surveys may be extended in different localities, so as to embrace lands desired to be entered under the homestead law, as authorized by the act of May 14, 1898 (30 Stat. L., 409), and to enable the survey of mission and other reservations.

With this end in view, I would respectfully recommend that the estimate of \$325,000 "For surveys and resurveys of public lands," submitted for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1904, be increased to \$400,000, with a proviso that the additional \$75,000, or so much thereof

as the demand for surveys may warrant, be applied to the survey of public lands, mission, and other reservations in Alaska.

In view of the time required for the transmission of correspondence to and from Alaska, I would earnestly recommend that whatever amount shall be specially assigned by law to Alaska may be made available for contracting until the entire sum shall have been contracted, thus avoiding the lapsing of the appropriation because of a failure to contract the full amount during the fiscal year for which the appropriation is made.

In this connection it is deemed proper to inclose herewith copy of a letter from the surveyor-general of Alaska, dated December 27, 1902, urging the necessity for providing higher rates of compensation per mile for surveys in Alaska than is now allowed by law.

I concur in the opinion of the surveyor-general that, in view of the remoteness from bases of supplies, cost of labor, transportation, and provisions, all of which tend to greatly increase the cost of making surveys in this extreme northern country, also in view of the shortness of the surveying seasons, and the excessive humidity along the coast, which interferes with the use of the solar compass, required by the Manual of Surveying Instructions, the compensation for surveys in Alaska should be largely increased over the rates now allowed by law for surveying the public lands.

The failure of the deputy who had the first contract for surveying public lands in Alaska to execute the surveys therein provided for, which has been attributed by him to the inadequate rates per mile allowed by law, would seem to show that the present rates constitute a serious obstacle to the letting of contracts in this district to competent surveyors.

I would therefore recommend the insertion of the following proviso in the paragraph of the appropriation act making provision for surveys and resurveys of public lands:

Provided further, That in the district of Alaska there may be allowed by the Commissioner of the General Land Office for surveys and resurveys rates not exceeding \$18 per linear mile for standard and meander lines, \$14 for township, and \$10 for section lines, and for the survey and resurvey of lands heavily timbered, mountainous, or covered with dense undergrowth there may be allowed by the said commissioner rates not exceeding \$35 per linear mile for standard and meander lines, \$33 for township, and \$30 for section lines.

Mr. Jones's letter is herewith returned.

Very respectfully,

W. A. RICHARDS, *Commissioner.*

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

INTERIOR DEPARTMENT,

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,

February 4, 1903.

Approved, and respectfully forwarded through the office of the Secretary of the Treasury for favorable action of the Congress.

E. A. HITCHCOCK, *Secretary.*

FOR HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, D. C., January 29, 1903.

DEAR SIR: I was talking with the Hon. Joseph G. Cannon, chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, with reference to the appropriation for making surveys in

Alaska, and urged that the general appropriation be increased from \$325,000 to a larger amount, probably \$425,000 or \$450,000, with a provision that \$100,000 or \$126,000 be used for surveys in Alaska. Mr. Cannon objects to this on the ground that your office sent in no estimate for surveys in Alaska, and stated that your office sent in the regular estimate of \$325,000 given it last year, of which \$5,000 was allowed to Alaska, and under which I assume that about the same amount will be allowed to Alaska during the coming year if no further appropriation should be made.

In your annual report on page 9 I find this statement:

"The surveyor-general recommends an appropriation of \$113,872 for surveys in the district of Alaska for the next fiscal year. The grounds upon which he urges this appropriation are the necessity of establishing the rectangular system of surveys; of protecting the numerous interests that have within the past few years been developing in that district, and of preventing conflict between the mission, church, and school reservations on the one hand, and claims under the various public-land laws on the other, which are sure to arise if delay of surveys because of inadequate appropriation be longer continued."

This probably is not a specific recommendation. I would like to be advised as to the attitude or wishes of your Department with reference to Alaskan surveys through a letter to myself or a letter to the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations. I have assumed all the time that your Department is in favor of having the surveys made in Alaska just as soon as possible, and, therefore, in favor of an appropriation for this purpose.

Very sincerely, yours,

W. C. JONES.

Hon. E. A. HITCHCOCK,
Secretary of the Interior.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF U. S. SURVEYOR-GENERAL FOR THE DISTRICT OF ALASKA,
Sitka, December 27, 1902.

SIR: In view of the probability of Congress making a comparatively liberal appropriation during this session for extending the lines of public-land surveys in Alaska, I have the honor to again invite attention to the necessity of providing for a higher rate of compensation per mile for such surveys than is now allowed by law.

The reason for this will be manifest when the situation of the lands to be surveyed and the conditions existing in this District are taken into consideration, and which may be enumerated as follows:

First. This territory is remote from a base of supplies, and the cost of provisions is therefore considerably higher, even on the seacoast, than in the other surveying districts.

Second. As most of the lands to be surveyed are more or less remote from the coast, and as there have been no roads opened up in this country, all supplies for parties operating in the field will have to be transported to them by means of pack animals or by men employed for that purpose, and in either case the cost will be very heavy.

Third. The cost of labor is much higher than in the other surveying districts. The mining companies and other enterprises pay good wages to their employees, and laborers will not engage for this line of work for a less wage than can be obtained in other lines of service; and the expense of transporting assistants from Seattle or other points remote from the district would be so heavy as not to relieve the situation to any considerable extent.

Fourth. The climate of the coast region of this district is an obstacle to progress in making surveys in those localities. The humidity along the coast of Alaska is excessive. Cloudiness is the rule and not the exception during the greater portion of the summer months. There are many consecutive days when it is impossible to make either the solar or stellar observations required by the Manual of Surveying Instructions. This is a serious hindrance and is taken into account by surveyors when considering proposals to execute surveys where these conditions prevail.

Another detriment to obtaining bids at present rates is the shortness of the season in which surveying can be done. This is especially true of the interior regions. The summers in those localities are short and warm, pushing vegetation to maturity rapidly; but it soon passes away and is succeeded by very cold weather, during which it is impracticable to prosecute work in the field, and therefore in contracts of any considerable magnitude it would require two seasons to fulfill them, which would add heavily to the expense.

Furthermore, it is the purpose of this office to prohibit the use of wooden posts or other perishable material for marking the corners of surveys, and in some instances, because of inability to procure stones of the required size, it may be necessary to use iron pipes, which would add somewhat to the cost.

Experience has also shown the futility of endeavoring to obtain execution of surveys in Alaska by experienced deputies for the prices now allowed by law. In the spring of 1901 invitations for proposals to make a survey of base and meridian lines in the Copper River country were advertised and also mailed to quite a number of deputies in Alaska, but all except two declined to make a bid, assigning as reasons in most cases that the rates were too low and the risks too great. The two who submitted bids were, comparatively speaking, unacquainted with the difficulties likely to be encountered in carrying out the contract; and it may not be amiss to say that the one to whom the contract was awarded has not attempted to perform the work he contracted to do and manifests but little disposition to do so.

Taking all of the foregoing facts into consideration, I am constrained to believe it will cost at least 100 per cent more to execute a surveying contract in Alaska than in the other surveying districts, and I therefore respectfully recommend that rates for making public land surveys in Alaska be increased 100 per cent at least, or what I deem would be more advantageous to the Government, make provision for executing them at a per diem rate.

Very respectfully,

WM. L. DISTIN,
Surveyor-General.

The COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE,
Washington, D. C.

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